

they were an attempt to purify the usages which had been taken over by compromise from heathenism. In the sixth century in the West dances in church were often forbidden. The only stock of ideas in the eighth and ninth centuries were fantastic notions of nature, heaven and hell, history, supernatural agents, etc., which notions the ecclesiastics had an interest to teach. Dramatic representation was a means of teaching. The external action corresponded closely with the mental concept or story. From the time of Charlemagne pantomimes, tableaux, etc., set forth incidents of biblical stories and the resurrection, ascension, etc. The mores of the age seized on these modes of representation and gave method and color to them. All the grossness, superstition, and bad taste of the age were put into them. Satan and his demons were realistically represented, and the mass was travestied by ecclesiastics in a manner which we should think would be deeply offensive to them.¹ It was another case of conventionality for a limited time and place. Some of the clergy no doubt enjoyed the fun; others had to tolerate what

was old and traditional. The folk drama reawakened as burlesque, parody, satire. The evil characters in the Scripture stories (Pharaoh, Judas, Caiaphas, the Jews) all fed this interest. All persons and institutions which pretended to be great and good and were not such provoked satire (clergy, nobles, warriors, women). The drama, introduced to show forth religious notions, served also to set forth others (social, political, city rivalry, class antagonisms). The "mass of fools" was a complete parody of the mass, with mock music and vestments and burlesque ceremony. In the "mass of innocents" children took the place of adults and carried out the ceremony as a parody. At the "feast of the ass" an ass was led into church and treated with mock respect. This last degenerated into obscenity, indecency, and disorder. Bulls and edicts against it were long vain. It was popular as a relief from restraint.² It continued the function of the Saturnalia, which had been a grand frolic

¹Scherr, *D. R W.*, I, 245.

²Lenient, *La Satire en France au M.A.* ^ 422 ; Du Cange, s. v. "Festum Asino ram."